

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2021-130-S

Joint Application for Approval of the Sale of Assets and Transfer of Facilities, Territory and Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from Synergy Utilities, L.P. to South Carolina Water Utilities, Incorporated	DIRECT TESTIMONY OF BARBARA JOHNSON WILLIAMS
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1 **Q: Can you State your Name for the Record?**

2 A: Barbara Johnson Williams

3 **Q: What is your title and how long have you been in that capacity?**

4 A: I am President of the Northwood Estates Homeowners Association, and I have been for over
5 fifteen years.

6 **Q: Why did your organization vote to intervene in this Public Service Commission Action?**

7 A: We have been customers of Synergy Utilities, L.P. for years, to the best of my knowledge, for
8 most or all of the time this development has existed.

9 **Q: Have you had consistent issues with service at your homes in Northwood Estates?**

10 A: Yes, for years there are repeated issues with “lines” breaking. The Homeowner’s Association
11 has had numerous reports of sewage and wastewater backing up into the bathtubs, showers,
12 sinks, and other plumbing fixtures. This has also been observed in homes’ yards. Personally, I
13 have had problems with sewage leaks in front of my home.

14 **Q: Have you had issues with customer service from Synergy Utilities, L.P.?**

15 A: Yes, on behalf of the Homeowner’s Association, I have expressed several concerns to
16 Utilities, L.P. The issue that we have across the board is bills that are far higher than nearby
17 neighborhoods serviced by other companies. My bill, for example, has neared one hundred
18 dollars a month for sewer services in the past year. We have also complained about the lack of
19 timely repairs and unreasonable delays in action to either address customer service issues or
20 physical problems in the system. I have also made complaints on behalf of the Homeowner’s
21 Association that service was turned off for disabled and elderly persons who have issues keeping
22 up with all financial obligations.

23 **Q: Have you noticed significant investment in improving the sewer service in your**
24 **neighborhood?**

25 A: While Synergy Utilities, L.P. would have better records on this subject, I am not aware of any
26 significant investment made in improving service to this area. We are only aware of patchwork
27 repairs made to keep the system minimally functional.

1 **Q: Have you brought any of this up to Synergy Utilities, L.P.?**

2 A: Yes, I have called, written letters, and even gone to Columbia to meet in person with
3 representatives.

4 **Q: How do these problems affect your position with regard to the pending action before the**
5 **Public Service Commission?**

6 A: We fear that Synergy Utilities, L.P. has set an extremely high rate for our sewer service while
7 not providing consistent, reliable, or quality utilities to us. By attempting to transfer our services
8 to another company, we understand that the quality of service could improve, stagnate, or decline
9 further. However, we know that Synergy Utilities, L.P. has profited from our neighborhood for
10 decades and do not believe it is in our interest or the public interest to depart without making an
11 effort to improve our sewer service.

12 **Q: Do you oppose a public utility taking ownership or control of your sewer service?**

13 A: We would welcome the Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities as the controller of our
14 sewer service and would not oppose transfer to them.

15 **Q: Do you oppose a delay in final approval of any transfer until an agreement can be**
16 **reached for any party to transfer assets and customers to the Orangeburg Department of**
17 **Public Utilities?**

18 A: We have no issue with that whatsoever.

19 **Q: Does this conclude your current testimony?**

20 A: Yes, although I would like the opportunity to respond to any other testimony as necessary.